

Message Text

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44

ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6187

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, MT

SUBJECT: MINTOFF MOVES TO ABOLISH MALTESE TITLES OF
NOBILITY

1. PRIME MINISTER MINTOFF HAS INTRODUCED A BILL IN
PARLIAMENT TO ABOLISH ALL MALTESE TITLES OF NOBILITY
AND TO ESTABLISH INSTEAD A MALTESE SOCIETY OF HONOR.
MEMBERSHIP IN THE NEW SOCIETY WILL BE LIMITED TO A
TOTAL OF TWENTY MALTESE, PLUS AN UNDETERMINED NUMBER
OF HONORARY FOREIGN MEMBERS. APPOINTMENTS TO THE
SOCIETY WILL BE MADE ANNUALLY ON REPUBLIC DAY
(DECEMBER 13) BY THE PRESIDENT OF MALTA ON THE WRITTEN
ADVICE OF THE CABINET (I.E., MINTOFF) FOR "ACTS OF
EXCEPTIONAL BRAVERY" AND "DISTINGUISHED SERVICE TO
MALTA."

2. IN ADDITION TO ABOLISHING ALL EXISTING TITLES,
THE PROPOSED BILL ALSO WILL PROHIBIT THE FUTURE
ACCEPTANCE BY A MALTESE CITIZEN OF ANY FOREIGN
HONOR, AWARD OR DECORATION (EXCEPT A UNIVERSITY
DEGREE) UNLESS: (A) IT IS CONFERRED BY A FOREIGN
STATE OR SOVEREIGN ORDER HAVING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS
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WITH MALTA; AND (B) THE AWARD IS APPROVED IN WRITING

BY THE PRESIDENT OF MALTA ON THE WRITTEN ADVICE OF
THE CABINET (MINTOFF, AGAIN).

3. COMMENT: IN MOVING TO ABOLISH EXISTING MALTESE
TITLES, WHICH ARE AMONG THE OLDEST IN EUROPE, WITH
MANY OF THEM PREDATING THE PERIOD OF THE RULE OF
THE KNIGHTS OF MALTA (1530-1798), MINTOFF IS TAKING
ANOTHER STEP TO EMPHASIZE MALTA'S NEW STATUS AS A
REPUBLIC. IN PRELIMINARY PARLIAMENARY DISCUSSIONS
OF HIS BILL, MINTOFF HAS URGED THAT HIS PROPOSALS
NOT BECOME A PARTISAN ISSUE BETWEEN THE LABOR AND
NATIONALIST PARTIES SINCE THEY ARE FOR THE "GOOD
OF THE COUNTRY." THE EMBASSY DOUBTS THAT THE
NATIONALISTS WILL MAKE A SERIOUS EFFORT TO DEFEND
THE MALTESE NOBLES, SINCE MINTOFF'S PARLIAMENTARY
MAJORITY ASSURES HIM OF VICTORY IN ANY EVENT. ON
THE OTHER HAND, MINTOFF'S PERSONAL CONTROL OF
APPOINTMENTS TO THE PLANNED MALTESE SOCIETY OF HONOR
WILL CERTAINLY NOT PLEASE THE NATIONALISTS. WIGGINS

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